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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Monitoring Ebola Situation

Kerrville, Texas (October 3, 2014) – The City of Kerrville is working in close communications with Peterson Regional Medical Center (PRMC) to monitor the Ebola situation. PRMC is providing leadership in coordinating the most timely, factual, relevant public health information regarding Ebola with valued community partners to include the City of Kerrville, Kerr County, local law enforcement and EMS, area nursing homes, the Veteran's Administration Hospital, Kerrville State Hospital, and all surrounding independent school districts. All of the aforementioned entities have a role in keeping our community informed and safe. PRMC, as the regional healthcare resource, is taking strong steps to serve as the hub of communication.

At this point, the Center for Disease Control has stated the case in Dallas is an isolated event. The Ebola virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission via direct contact of bodily fluids (blood, feces, saliva, semen, urine, or vomit) of infected people, and with surfaces and

materials (bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids. Fortunately, it is not an airborne virus, like the flu or common cold.

The incubation period, that is, the time interval from infection with the virus to onset of symptoms is 2 to 21 days. Humans are not infectious until they become symptomatic. First symptoms are the sudden onset of fever fatigue, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. This is followed by vomiting, diarrhea, rash, symptoms of impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding.

There is no FDA-approved vaccine available for Ebola. The CDC offers these tips if you are traveling to or are in an area affected by an Ebola outbreak:

- Practice careful hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid contact with blood and body fluids;
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids (such as clothes, bedding, needles, and medical equipment);
- Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola;
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids, and raw meat prepared from these animals;
- Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated. The U.S. embassy or consulate is often able to provide advice on facilities; and

- After you return, monitor your health for 21 days and seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola.

“We believe the potential for an Ebola exposure in Kerr County is very slim,” stated Ashlea Boyle, Special Projects Manager. “We would like to reassure the community that local officials are closely monitoring the Ebola situation and are taking the necessary precautions to protect the safety of our citizens. With Peterson Regional Medical Clinic, we are utilizing information from the Texas Department of State Health Services, The Center for Disease Control, the American Hospital Association and other reliable sources. We will keep the public informed through a collaborative effort with PRMC through local media and our website, as appropriate.”

PRMC has created a web page specifically to update the public at all times on Ebola and other seasonal viruses and to house health resources and reports. The new Health Alert page can be found at www.petersonrmc.com/Community. Select Health Alert on the Community main page. A copy of the Health Alert from David L. Lakey, M.D., Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services is attached and can be found also be found on the PRMC website.

As flu season approaches, it's a good time to remember good health habits to help avoid the spread of germs, also provided by the CDC:

- Get the flu vaccination if you are able to receive it;

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too;
- If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick;
- Clean your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs; and
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

For additional information contact Ashlea Boyle, Special Projects Manager at (830) 258-1153 via e-mail to ashlea.boyle@kerrvilletx.gov or visit the city's website at www.kerrvilletx.gov.

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HEALTH ALERT

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) laboratory reported a positive laboratory test result for ebola today on a patient in a Dallas County hospital. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have confirmed the positive result. The patient had come from West Africa to visit family members in the United States during the previous week. He presented to a Dallas County hospital with symptoms consistent with ebola and specimens were submitted to both laboratories for testing today. The patient is in isolation under standard, contact, and droplet precautions. Persons who had contact with the patient are being identified, informed, and monitored.

The positive result on the patient in Texas does not represent an increased risk to the general community. The virus is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or unprotected mucous membrane) with the blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with ebola, with objects like needles that have been contaminated with the virus, or with infected animals. Ebola is not spread through the air, water or, in general, by food; however, in Africa, ebola may be spread as a result of handling raw bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food).

Healthcare providers should be alert for symptoms and travel history that might indicate ebola and should evaluate these patients' risk of exposure (See <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>.) DSHS has the capacity to perform PCR testing for ebola. All testing must be approved by DSHS prior to specimen submission. Physicians should contact their local health department to request testing for patients who have both consistent symptoms and risk factors. Patients who meet the criteria below are considered Person Under Investigation (PUI):

1. Clinical criteria: fever greater than 38.6 degrees Celsius or 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit, and additional symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or unexplained hemorrhage; AND
 2. Epidemiologic risk factors within the past 21 days before the onset of symptoms, such as contact with blood or other body fluids or human remains of a patient known to have or suspected to have ebola; residence in—or travel to—an area where ebola transmission is active (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and some parts of Nigeria); or direct handling of bats or non-human primates from disease-endemic areas.
- Early recognition and treatment of ebola is important for providing appropriate patient care and preventing the spread of infection. Ebola PUIs and confirmed cases can be cared for in hospitals using standard, contact and droplet infection prevention protocols. (For more information see <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/patient-management-us-hospitals.html>.)

Basic interventions (providing intravenous fluids balancing electrolytes; maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure; and treating other infections if they occur) when used early, can improve the chances of survival: No specific vaccine or medicine (e.g., antiviral drug) has been proven to be effective against Ebola. (For more information see <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/treatment/index.html>.)

DSHS and the CDC have received many calls from health departments and hospitals about suspected ebola cases in travelers from the affected countries and will continue to triage inquiries and, when appropriate, will arrange for testing at the DSHS Laboratory and the CDC.